

## 2.7 Healthy Lifestyle Success Stories



### Employee Cholesterol Screenings

#### the people

Barber Foods is a manufacturer of value-added, poultry-based convenience foods. The company, founded by Gus Barber in 1955, currently employs approximately 750 associates with national origins from over 50 different countries. Fifty-six different languages are spoken at Barber's Portland-based production facility. Many associates came to America as refugees or immigrants. As a result, many have little or no preventive medical history or awareness of good health practices. To this end, management determined that a strong employee wellness initiative was warranted and created a formal company Wellness Team.

#### the need

Through Medical Plan claims data, the company found a high prevalence of cardiovascular diseases among the employee population. Knowing that these diseases are often the result of poor lifestyle behaviors, Barber Foods wanted to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease and identify employees at high risk.

#### the idea

Barber's Wellness Team decided to sponsor health screenings to increase awareness, identify employees at risk, and encourage healthier lifestyles.

#### the idea at work

The Wellness Team offers screenings on a quarterly basis. The screenings are promoted through the company newsletter, in the Wellness Calendar, at annual Benefit Open Enrollment meetings, and at our Associate Wellness Boards located throughout the facility. Screenings are conducted at the job-site and are on company time to ensure good participation rates. Department heads are encouraged to support their employees in participating. On average, between 80 and 100 associates participate each quarter.

At the time of the screening, the associate receives follow-up education and referral from the nurse who conducted the screen. Nurses assist high-risk associates by developing a plan to address risk factors, along with regular follow-up at the worksite.

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### Employee Cholesterol (continued)

#### the cost

Barber Foods contracts with an Occupational Health Provider. Nursing coverage is provided at the production facility 12 hours per day, five to six days per week. Barber Foods elected to purchase a Cholestec machine for approximately \$2,000 so that nurses can conduct cholesterol and blood glucose screenings. Associates are typically charged \$10 per screening.

#### the results

Barber's nurses have identified several associates who are at risk due to family history and lifestyle behaviors. Nurses also identified several employees at very high risk. In these cases, counseling was provided and associates were encouraged to follow up with their current physician. If necessary, associates were assisted in locating a physician and arranging appointments for follow-up.

30%  
reduction  
in claims

The company's on-site nurse has found the screenings and convenience of having a Cholestec machine to be very helpful. "We have conducted three cholesterol screenings over the last 18 months. Several associates have participated in at least two of the three screens and have demonstrated lifestyle changes that are evident in the screening results. In one of the screenings, three associates were identified as very high risk and were directed to their Primary Care Physician for immediate care."

Through the employee screenings, the company has been able to identify employees in the high-risk category for cholesterol, blood pressure, and family history. Having a Cholestec machine on-site has made it possible for Barber to identify employees at high risk for cardiovascular disease, and assist these employees in addressing these risks.



Data provided by the Maine Health Information Center shows the following per-member, per-month medical charges for heart and other circulatory diseases.

2001	2002
\$15	\$10

This equated to a 30% reduction in claims for this disease category. With nearly 800 employees, this reduction translates into bottom-line results for Barber Foods.

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